



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health and Family Services

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For Immediate Release

MINIMIZING EXPOSURE TO WEST NILE VIRUS

(MADISON, June 17, 2005) The Department of Health and Family Services today confirmed three cases of West Nile virus in dead birds collected from Kenosha, Pierce and Rock counties. The Department is issuing tips for minimizing human exposure to the virus.

"No human cases of West Nile virus in Wisconsin have been reported this year," said Patricia Fox, Chief of the Department's Communicable Disease Epidemiology Section. "We will continue to monitor the mosquito and dead bird population until November, but remind people to protect themselves all season long."

Below are tips to minimize your exposure to mosquitoes when outdoors:

- Use effective mosquito repellant and apply according to the label instructions.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants, socks, and shoes.
- Avoid being outside during times of high mosquito activity, specifically around dawn and dusk.
- Keep window screens repaired so that mosquitoes cannot enter your home.

Wisconsin has been conducting dead bird surveillance of crows, blue jays, and ravens since May 2nd as part of the Department's plan to monitor the spread of West Nile virus in the state. A positive test confirms that the virus is present in the area, but does not mean there is an imminent health risk to the community.

Less than one percent of people bitten by a mosquito infected with West Nile virus will become seriously ill. About twenty percent may develop mild symptoms which include headache, fever, muscle pains, a skin rash, swollen lymph nodes, and nausea and vomiting.

To help reduce the mosquito population, it is important to get rid of standing water. Below are some steps you can take in your own yard:

- Dispose of discarded tires, cans, or plastic containers left outside that may contain water.
- Drain standing water from pool or hot tub covers.

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- Turn over plastic wading pools and wheel barrows when not in use.
- Change the water in bird baths, pet dishes and wading pools every 3-4 days.
- Keep drains, ditches and culverts clean of trash and weeds so water will drain properly.
- Clean gutters to ensure they drain properly.

In 2004, 12 human cases of West Nile virus were diagnosed in Wisconsin, while 17 cases were diagnosed in 2003. In addition, last year a total of 122 birds and 19 horses were tested positive for WNV in Wisconsin.

To report a sick or dead crow, blue jay, or raven, call the West Nile Virus Hotline at 1-800-433-1610.

More information about West Nile virus is available at http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/dph_bcd/westnilevirus/.

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